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GREEK AND ROMAN GHOST STORIES

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BY

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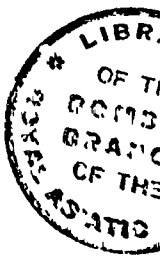

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THIS collection was originally begun at the suggestion of Mr. Marion Crawford, whose wide and continual reading of the classics supplied more than one of the stories. They were put together during a number of years of casual browsing among the classics, and will perhaps interest others who indulge in similar amusements.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	THE POWER OF THE DEAD TO RETURN TO EARTH	1
II.	THE BELIEF IN GHOSTS IN GREECE AND ROME	13
III.	STORIES OF HAUNTING	19
IV.	NECROMANCY	33
V.	VISIONS OF THE DEAD IN SLEEP	45
VI.	APPARITIONS OF THE DEAD	54
VII.	WARNING APPARITIONS	72

GREEK AND ROMAN GHOST STORIES

I

THE POWER OF THE DEAD TO RETURN TO EARTH

THOUGH there is no period at which the ancients do not seem to have believed in a future life, continual confusion prevails when they come to picture the existence led by man in the other world, as we see from the sixth book of the *Æneid*. Combined with the elaborate mythology of Greece, we are confronted with the primitive belief of Italy, and doubtless of Greece too—a belief supported by all the religious rites in connection with the dead—that the spirits of the departed lived on in the tomb with the body. As cremation gradually superseded burial, the idea took shape that the soul might have an existence of its own, altogether independent of the body, and a place of abode was assigned to it in a hole in the centre of the earth, where it lived on in eternity with other souls.

This latter view seems to have become the official

theory, at least in Italy, in classical days. In the gloomy, horrible Etruscan religion, the shades were supposed to be in charge of the Conductor of the Dead—a repulsive figure, always represented with wings and long, matted hair and a hammer, whose appearance was afterwards imitated in the dress of the man who removed the dead from the arena. Surely something may be said for Gaston Boissier's suggestion that Dante's Tuscan blood may account to some extent for the gruesome imagery of the *Inferno*.

Cicero* tells us that it was generally believed that the dead lived on beneath the earth, and special provision was made for them in every Latin town in the "mundus," a deep trench which was dug before the "pomerium" was traced, and regarded as the particular entrance to the lower world for the dead of the town in question. The trench was vaulted over, so that it might correspond more or less with the sky, a gap being left in the vault which was closed with the stone of the departed—the "lapis manalis." Corn was thrown into the trench, which was filled up with earth, and an altar erected over it. On three solemn days in the year—August 25, October 5, and November 8—the trench was opened and the stone removed, the dead thus once more having free access to the world above, where the usual offerings were made to them.†

These provisions clearly show an official belief

* *Tusc. Disp.*, i. 16.

† Ov., *Fast.*, iv. 821 ; Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, p. 211.

that death did not create an impassable barrier between the dead and the living. The spirits of the departed still belonged to the city of their birth, and took an interest in their old home. They could even return to it on the days when "the trench of the gods of gloom lies open and the very jaws of hell yawn wide."* Their rights must be respected, if evil was to be averted from the State. In fact, the dead were gods with altars of their own,† and Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, could write to her sons, "You will make offerings to me and invoke your parent as a god."‡ Their cult was closely connected with that of the Lares—the gods of the hearth, which symbolized a fixed abode in contrast with the early nomad life. Indeed, there is practically no distinction between the Lares and the Manes, the souls of the good dead. But the dead had their own festival, the "Dies Parentales," held from the 13th to the 21st of February, in Rome ;§ and in Greece the "Genesia," celebrated on the 5th of Bœdromion, towards the end of September, about which we know very little. ‖

There is nothing more characteristic of paganism than the passionate longing of the average man to perpetuate his memory after death in the world round which all his hopes and aspirations clung. Cicero uses it as an argument for immortality.¶

* Macrob., *Sat.*, i. 16. † Cic., *De Leg.*, ii. 22.
‡ "Deum parentem" (Corn. Nep., *Fragm.*, 12).
§ Cp. Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*
‖ Rohde, *Psyche*, p. 216. Cp. Herod., iv. 26.
¶ *Tusc. Disp.*, i. 12, 27.

Many men left large sums to found colleges to celebrate their memories and feast at their tombs on stated occasions.* Lucian laughs at this custom when he represents the soul of the ordinary man in the next world as a mere bodiless shade that vanishes at a touch like smoke. It subsists on the libations and offerings it receives from the living, and those who have no friends or relatives on earth are starving and famished.† Violators of tombs were threatened with the curse of dying the last of their race—a curse which Macaulay, with his intense family affection, considered the most awful that could be devised by man; and the fact that the tombs were built by the high road, so that the dead might be cheered by the greeting of the passer-by, lends an additional touch of sadness to a walk among the crumbling ruins that line the Latin or the Appian Way outside Rome to-day.

No one of the moderns has caught the pagan feeling towards death better than Giosuè Carducci, a true spiritual descendant of the great Romans of old, if ever there was one. He tells how, one glorious June day, he was sitting in school, listening to the priest outraging the verb "amo," when his eyes wandered to the window and lighted on a cherry-tree, red with fruit, and then strayed away to the hills and the sky and the distant curve of the sea-shore. All Nature was teeming with life, and he

* Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 259 *ff.*

† *De Luctu*, 9.

felt an answering thrill, when suddenly, as if from the very fountains of being within him, there welled up a consciousness of death, and with it the formless nothing, and a vision of himself lying cold, motionless, dumb in the black earth, while above him the birds sang, the trees rustled in the wind, the rivers ran on in their course, and the living revelled in the warm sun, bathed in its divine light. This first vision of death often haunted him in later years;* and one realizes that such must often have been the feelings of the Romans, and still more often of the Greeks, for the joy of the Greek in life was far greater than that of the Roman. Peace was the only boon that death could bring to a pagan, and "Pax tecum æterna" is among the commonest of the inscriptions. The life beyond the grave was at best an unreal and joyless copy of an earthly existence, and Achilles told Odysseus that he would rather be the serf of a poor man upon earth than Achilles among the shades.

When we come to inquire into the appearance of ghosts revisiting the glimpses of the moon, we find, as we should expect, that they are a vague, unsubstantial copy of their former selves on earth. In Homer† the shade of Patroclus, which visited Achilles in a vision as he slept by the sea-shore, looks exactly as Patroclus had looked on earth, even down to the clothes. Hadrian's famous "animula vagula blandula" gives the same idea, and it would be difficult to imagine a disembodied spirit which

* Carducci, "Rimembranze di Scuola," in *Rime Nuove.*
† *Il.*, 23. 64.

retains its personality and returns to earth again except as a kind of immaterial likeness of its earthly self. We often hear of the extreme pallor of ghosts, which was doubtless due to their being bloodless and to the pallor of death itself. Propertius conceived of them as skeletons;* but the unsubstantial, shadowy aspect is by far the commonest, and best harmonizes with the life they were supposed to lead.

Hitherto we have been dealing with the spirits of the dead who have been duly buried and are at rest, making their appearance among men only at stated intervals, regulated by the religion of the State. The lot of the dead who have not been vouchsafed the trifling boon of a handful of earth cast upon their bones was very different. They had not yet been admitted to the world below, and were forced to wander for a hundred years before they might enter Charon's boat. Æneas beheld them on the banks of the Styx, stretching out their hands "ripæ ulterioris amore." The shade of Patroclus describes its hapless state to Achilles, as does that of Elpenor to Odysseus, when they meet in the lower world. It is not surprising that the ancients attached the highest importance to the duty of burying the dead, and that Pausanias blames Lysander for not burying the bodies of Philocles and the four thousand slain at Ægospotami, seeing that the Athenians even buried the Persian dead after Marathon.†

The spirits of the unburied were usually held to be bound, more or less, to the spot where their bodies

* "Turpia ossa," 4. 5. 4.

† Paus., 9. 32.

lay, and to be able to enter into communication with the living with comparative ease, even if they did not actually haunt them. They were, in fact, evil spirits which had to be propitiated and honoured in special rites. Their appearances among the living were not regulated by religion. They wandered at will over the earth, belonging neither to this world nor to the next, restless and malignant, unable to escape from the trammels of mortal life, in the joys of which they had no part. Thus, in the *Phædo** we read of souls "prowling about tombs and sepulchres, near which, as they tell us, are seen certain ghostly apparitions of souls which have not departed pure. . . . These must be the souls, not of the good, but of the evil, which are compelled to wander about such places in payment of the penalty of their former evil way of life."

Apuleius† classifies the spirits of the departed for us. The Manes are the good people, not to be feared so long as their rites are duly performed, as we have already seen; Lemures are disembodied spirits; while Larvæ are the ghosts that haunt houses. Apuleius, however, is wholly uncritical, and the distinction between Larvæ and Lemures is certainly not borne out by facts.

The Larvæ had distinct attributes, and were thought to cause epilepsy or madness. They were generally treated more or less as a joke,‡ and are

* 81 D. † *De Genio Socratis*, 15.

‡ Cp. Plautus, *Cas.*, iii. 4. 2; *Amphitr.*, ii. 2. 145; *Rudens*, v. 3. 67, etc.; and the use of the word "larvatus."

spoken of much as we speak of a bogey. They appear to have been entrusted with the torturing of the dead, as we see from the saying, "Only the Larvæ war with the dead."* In Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*,† when the question of the deification of the late Emperor Claudius is laid before a meeting of the gods, Father Janus gives it as his opinion that no more mortals should be treated in this way, and that "anyone who, contrary to this decree, shall hereafter be made, addressed, or painted as a god, should be delivered over to the Larvæ" and flogged at the next games.

Larva also means a skeleton, and Trimalchio, following the Egyptian custom, has one brought in and placed on the table during his famous feast. It is, as one would expect, of silver, and the millionaire freedman points the usual moral—"Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die."‡

The Larvæ were regular characters in the Atellane

* Pliny, *N. H.*, 1, Præf. 31: "Cum mortuis non nisi Larvas luctari."

† Seneca, *Apocol.*, 9. At the risk of irrelevance, I cannot refrain from pointing out the enduring nature of proverbs as exemplified in this section. Hercules grows more and more anxious at the turn the debate is taking, and hastens from one god to another, saying: "Don't grudge me this favour; the case concerns me closely. I shan't forget you when the time comes. One good turn deserves another" (Manus manum lavat). This is exactly the Neapolitan proverb, "One hand washes the other, and both together wash the face." "Una mano lava l' altra e tutt' e due si lavano la faccia," is more or less the modern version. In chapter vii. we have also "gallum in suo sterquilino plurimum posse," which corresponds to our own, "Every cock crows best on its own dunghill."

‡ Petr., *Sat.*, 34.

farces at Rome, where they performed various "danses macabres." Can these possibly be the prototypes of the Dances of Death so popular in the Middle Ages? We find something very similar on the well-known silver cups discovered at Bosco Reale, though Death itself does not seem to have been represented in this way. Some of the designs in the medieval series would certainly have appealed to the average bourgeois Roman of the Trimalchio type—*e.g.*, "Les Trois Vifs et les Trois Morts," the three men riding gaily out hunting and meeting their own skeletons. Such crude contrasts are just what one would expect to find at Pompeii.

Lemures and Larvæ are often confused, but Lemures is the regular word for the dead not at rest —the "Lemuri," or spirits of the churchyard, of some parts of modern Italy. They were evil spirits, propitiated in early days with blood. Hence the first gladiatorial games were given in connection with funerals. Both in Greece and in Rome there were special festivals for appeasing these restless spirits. Originally they were of a public character, for murder was common in primitive times, and such spirits would be numerous, as is proved by the festival lasting three days.

In Athens the Nemesia were held during Anthesterion (February-March). As in Rome, the days were unlucky. Temples were closed and business was suspended, for the dead were abroad. In the morning the doors were smeared with pitch, and those in the house chewed whitethorn to keep off

the evil spirits. On the last day of the festival offerings were made to Hermes, and the dead were formally bidden to depart.*

Ovid describes the Lemuria or Lemuralia.† They took place in May, which was consequently regarded as an unlucky month for marriages, and is still so regarded almost as universally in England to-day as it was in Rome during the principate of Augustus. The name of the festival Ovid derives from Remus, as the ghost of his murdered brother was said to have appeared to Romulus in his sleep and to have demanded burial. Hence the institution of the Lemuria.

The head of the family walked through the house with bare feet at dead of night, making the mystic sign with his first and fourth fingers extended, the other fingers being turned inwards and the thumb crossed over them, in case he might run against an unsubstantial spirit as he moved noiselessly along This is the sign of "le corna," held to be infallible against the Evil Eye in modern Italy. After solemnly washing his hands, he places black beans in his mouth, and throws others over his shoulders, saying, "With these beans do I redeem me and mine." He repeats this ceremony nine times without looking round, and the spirits are thought to follow unseen and pick up the beans. Then he purifies himself once more and clashes brass, and bids the demons

* *θύραζε, κῆρες, οὐκέτ' Ἀνθεστήρια.* Cp. Rohde, *Psyche*, 217.

† *Fast.*, v. 419 *ff.*

leave his house. When he has repeated nine times "Manes exite paterni," he looks round, and the ceremony is over, and the restless ghosts have been duly laid for a year.

Lamiæ haunted rooms, which had to be fumigated with sulphur, while some mystic rites were performed with eggs before they could be expelled.

The dead not yet at rest were divided into three classes—those who had died before their time, the *ἄωροι*, who had to wander till the span of their natural life was completed;* those who had met with violent deaths, the *βιαιοθάνατοι*; and the unburied, the *ἄταφοι*. In the Hymn to Hecate, to whom they were especially attached, they are represented as following in her train and taking part in her nightly revels in human shape. The lot of the murdered is no better, and executed criminals belong to the same class.

Spirits of this kind were supposed to haunt the place where their bodies lay. Hence they were regarded as demons, and were frequently entrusted with the carrying out of the strange curses, which have been found in their tombs, or in wells where a man had been drowned, or even in the sea, written on leaden tablets, often from right to left, or in queer characters, so as to be illegible, with another tablet fastened over them by means of a nail, symbolizing the binding effect it was hoped they would have—the "Defixiones," to give them their Latin name, which

* Tertull., *De An.*, 56.

are very numerous among the inscriptions. So real was the belief in these curses that the elder Pliny says that everyone is afraid of being placed under evil spells;* and they are frequently referred to in antiquity.

* *N. H.*, 28. 2. 19.

II

THE BELIEF IN GHOSTS IN GREECE AND ROME

GHOST stories play a very subordinate part in classical literature, as is only to be expected. The religion of the hard-headed, practical Roman was essentially formal, and consisted largely in the exact performance of an elaborate ritual. His relations with the dead were regulated with a care that might satisfy the most litigious of ghosts, and once a man had carried out his part of the bargain, he did not trouble his head further about his deceased ancestors, so long as he felt that they, in their turn, were not neglecting his interests. Yet the average man in Rome was glad to free himself from burdensome and expensive duties towards the dead that had come down to him from past generations, and the ingenuity of the lawyers soon devised a system of sham sales by which this could be successfully and honourably accomplished.*

Greek religion, it is true, found expression to a large extent in mythology; but the sanity of the Greek genius in its best days kept it free from excessive superstition. Not till the invasion of the

* Cic., *Murena*, 27.

West by the cults of the East do we find ghosts and spirits at all common in literature.

The belief in apparitions existed, however, at all times, even among educated people. The younger Pliny, for instance, writes to ask his friend Sura for his opinion as to whether ghosts have a real existence, with a form of their own, and are of divine origin, or whether they are merely empty air, owing their definite shape to our superstitious fears.

We must not forget that Suetonius, whose superstition has become proverbial, was a friend of Pliny, and wrote to him on one occasion, begging him to procure the postponement of a case in which he was engaged, as he had been frightened by a dream. Though Pliny certainly did not possess his friend's amazing credulity, he takes the request with becoming seriousness, and promises to do his best; but he adds that the real question is whether Suetonius's dreams are usually true or not. He then relates how he himself once had a vision of his mother-in-law, of all people, appearing to him and begging him to abandon a case he had undertaken. In spite of this awful warning he persevered, however, and it was well that he did so, for the case proved the beginning of his successful career at the Bar.* His uncle, the elder Pliny, seems to have placed more faith in his dreams, and wrote his account of the German wars entirely because he dreamt that Drusus appeared to him and implored him to preserve his name from oblivion.†

* *Ep.*, i. 18.

† *Ibid.*, 3. 5. 4.

Belief in Ghosts in Greece and Rome

The Plinies were undoubtedly two of the ablest and most enlightened men of their time; and the belief in the value of dreams is certainly not extinct among us yet. If we possess Artemidorus's book on the subject for the ancient world, we have also the "Smorfia" of to-day, so dear to the heart of the lotto-playing Neapolitan, which assigns a special number to every conceivable subject that can possibly occur in a dream—not excluding "u murtu che parl'" (the dead man that speaks)—for the guidance of the believing gambler in selecting the numbers he is to play for the week.

Plutarch placed great faith in ghosts and visions. In his Life of Dion * he notes the singular fact that both Dion and Brutus were warned of their approaching deaths by a frightful spectre. "It has been maintained," he adds, "that no man in his senses ever saw a ghost: that these are the delusive visions of women and children, or of men whose intellects are impaired by some physical infirmity, and who believe that their diseased imaginations are of divine origin. But if Dion and Brutus, men of strong and philosophic minds, whose understandings were not affected by any constitutional infirmity—if such men could place so much faith in the appearance of spectres as to give an account of them to their friends, I see no reason why we should depart from the opinion of the ancients that men had their evil genii, who disturbed them with fears and distressed their virtues. . . ."

* Chap. II

Greek and Roman Ghost Stories

In the opening of the *Philopseudus*, Lucian asks what it is that makes men so fond of a lie, and comments on their delight in romancing themselves, which is only equalled by the earnest attention with which they receive other people's efforts in the same direction. Tychiades goes on to describe his visit to Eucrates, a distinguished philosopher, who was ill in bed. With him were a Stoic, a Peripatetic, a Pythagorean, a Platonist, and a doctor, who began to tell stories so absurd and abounding in such monstrous superstition that he ended by leaving them in disgust. None of us have, of course, ever been present at similar gatherings, where, after starting with the inevitable Glamis mystery, everybody in the room has set to work to outdo his neighbour in marvellous yarns, drawing on his imagination for additional material, and, like Eucrates, being ready to stake the lives of his children on his veracity.

Another scoffer was Democritus of Abdera, who was so firmly convinced of the non-existence of ghosts that he took up his abode in a tomb and lived there night and day for a long time. Classical ghosts seem to have affected black rather than white as their favourite colour. Among the features of the gruesome entertainments with which Domitian loved to terrify his Senators were handsome boys, who appeared naked with their bodies painted black, like ghosts, and performed a wild dance.* On the following day one of them was generally sent as a present to each Senator. Some boys in the neigh-

* Dio Cass., *Domitian*, 9.

bourhood wished to shake Democritus's unbelief, so they dressed themselves in black with masks like skulls upon their heads and danced round the tomb where he lived. But, to their annoyance, he only put his head out and told them to go away and stop playing the fool.

The Greek and Roman stories hardly come up to the standards required by the Society for Psychical Research. They are purely popular, and the ghost is regarded as the deceased person, permitted or condemned by the powers of the lower world to hold communication with survivors on earth. Naturally, they were never submitted to critical inquiry, and there is no foreshadowing of any of the modern theories, that the phenomenon, if caused by the deceased, is not necessarily the deceased, though it may be an indication that "some kind of force is being exercised after death which is in some way connected with a person previously known on earth," or that the apparitions may be purely local, or due entirely to subjective hallucination on the part of the person beholding them. Strangely enough, we rarely find any of those interesting cases, everywhere so well attested, of people appearing just about the time of their death to friends or relatives to whom they are particularly attached, or with whom they have made a compact that they will appear, should they die first, if it is possible. The classical instance of this is the well-known story of Lord Brougham who, while taking a warm bath in Sweden, saw a school friend whom he

had not met for many years, but with whom he had long ago "committed the folly of drawing up an agreement written with our blood, to the effect that whichever of us died first should appear to the other, and thus solve any doubts we had entertained of the life after death." There are, however, a number of stories of the passing of souls, which are curiously like some of those collected by the Society for Psychical Research, in the Fourth Book of Gregory the Great's Dialogues.

Another noticeable difference is that apparitions in most well-authenticated modern ghost stories are of a comforting character, whereas those in the ancient world are nearly all the reverse. This difference we may attribute to the entire change in the aspect of the future life which we owe to modern Christianity. As we have seen, there was little that was comforting in the life after death as conceived by the old pagan religions, while in medieval times the horrors of hell were painted in the most lurid colours, and were emphasized more than the joys of heaven.

III

STORIES OF HAUNTING

In a letter to Sura* the younger Pliny gives us what may be taken as a prototype of all later haunted-house stories. At one time in Athens there was a roomy old house where nobody could be induced to live. In the dead of night the sound of clanking chains would be heard, distant at first, proceeding doubtless from the garden behind or the inner court of the house, then gradually drawing nearer and nearer, till at last there appeared the figure of an old man with a long beard, thin and emaciated, with chains on his hands and feet. The house was finally abandoned, and advertised to be let or sold at an absurdly low price. The philosopher Athenodorus read the notice on his arrival in Athens, but the smallness of the sum asked aroused his suspicions. However, as soon as he heard the story he took the house. He had his bed placed in the front court, close to the main door, dismissed his slaves, and prepared to pass the night there, reading and writing, in order to prevent his thoughts from wandering to the ghost. He worked on for some time without anything happening; but

* *Ep.*, vii. 27.

at last the clanking of chains was heard in the distance. Athenodorus did not raise his eyes or stop his work, but kept his attention fixed and listened. The sounds gradually drew nearer, and finally entered the room where he was sitting. Then he turned round and saw the apparition. It beckoned him to follow, but he signed to it to wait and went on with his work. Not till it came and clanked its chains over his very head would he take up a lamp and follow it. The figure moved slowly forward, seemingly weighed down with its heavy chains, until it reached an open space in the courtyard. There it vanished. Athenodorus marked the spot with leaves and grass, and on the next day the ground was dug up in the presence of a magistrate, when the skeleton of a man with some rusty chains was discovered. The remains were buried with all ceremony, and the apparition was no more seen.

Lucian tells the same story in the *Philopseudus*, with some ridiculous additions, thoroughly in keeping with the surroundings.

An almost exactly similar story has been preserved by Robert Wodrow, the indefatigable collector, in a notebook which he appears to have intended to be the foundation of a scientific collection of marvellous tales. Wodrow died early in the eighteenth century. Gilbert Rule, the founder and first Principal of Edinburgh University, once reached a desolate inn in a lonely spot on the Grampians. The inn was full, and they were obliged to make him up a bed in a house near-by that had been vacant for thirty years.

"He walked some time in the room," says Wodrow,* "and committed himself to God's protection, and went to bed. There were two candles left on the table, and these he put out. There was a large bright fire remaining. He had not been long in bed till the room door is opened and an apparition in shape of a country tradesman came in, and opened the curtains without speaking a word. Mr. Rule was resolved to do nothing till it should speak or attack him, but lay still with full composure, committing himself to the Divine protection and conduct. The apparition went to the table, lighted the two candles, brought them to the bedside, and made some steps toward the door, looking still to the bed, as if he would have Mr. Rule rising and following. Mr. Rule still lay still, till he should see his way further cleared. Then the apparition, who the whole time spoke none, took an effectual way to raise the doctor. He carried back the candles to the table and went to the fire, and with the tongs took down the kindled coals, and laid them on the deal chamber floor. The doctor then thought it time to rise and put on his clothes, in the time of which the spectre laid up the coals again in the chimney, and, going to the table, lifted the candles and went to the door, opened it, still looking to the Principal, as he would have him following the candles, which he now, thinking there was something extraordinary in the case, after looking to God for direction, inclined to do. The apparition went down some steps with

* Burton's *The Book-Hunter: Robert Wodrow.*

the candles, and carried them into a long trance, at the end of which there was a stair which carried down to a low room. This the spectre went down, and stooped, and set down the lights on the lowest step of the stair, and straight disappears."

"The learned Principal," continues Burton, "whose courage and coolness deserve the highest commendation, lighted himself back to bed with the candles, and took the remainder of his rest undisturbed. Being a man of great sagacity, on ruminating over his adventure, he informed the Sheriff of the county 'that he was much of the mind there was murder in the case.' The stone whereon the candles were placed was raised, and there 'the plain remains of a human body were found, and bones, to the conviction of all.' It was supposed to be an old affair, however, and no traces could be got of the murderer. Rule undertook the functions of the detective, and pressed into the service the influence of his own profession. He preached a great sermon on the occasion, to which all the neighbouring people were summoned; and behold in the time of his sermon, an old man near eighty years was awakened, and fell a-weeping, and before the whole company acknowledged that at the building of that house, he was the murderer."

The main features of the story have changed very little in the course of ages, except in the important point of the conviction of the murderer, which would have been effected in a very different way in a Greek story. Doubtless a similar tale could be found in the folk-lore of almost any nation.

Stories of Haunting

Plutarch* relates how, in his native city of Chæronæa, a certain Damon had been murdered in some baths. Ghosts continued to haunt the spot ever afterwards, and mysterious groans were heard, so that at last the doors were walled up. "And to this very day," he continues, "those who live in the neighbourhood imagine that they see strange sights and are terrified with cries of sorrow."

It is quite clear from Plautus that ghost stories, even if not taken very seriously, aroused a wide-spread interest in the average Roman of his day, just as they do in the average Briton of our own. They were doubtless discussed in a half-joking way. The apparitions were generally believed to frighten people, just as they are at present, though the well-authenticated stories of such occurrences would seem to show that genuine ghosts, or whatever one likes to call them, have the power of paralyzing fear.

In the *Mostellaria*,† Plautus uses a ghost as a recognized piece of supernatural machinery. The regulation father of Roman comedy has gone away on a journey, and in the meantime the son has, as usual, almost reached the end of his father's fortune. The father comes back unexpectedly, and the son turns in despair to his faithful slave, Tranio, for help. Tranio is equal to the occasion, and undertakes to frighten the inconvenient parent away again. He gives an account of an apparition that has been seen, and has announced that it is the ghost of a stranger from over-seas, who has been dead for six years.

* *Cimon*, i. † II. 5. 67.

"Here must I dwell," it had declared, "for the gods of the lower world will not receive me, seeing that I died before my time. My host murdered me, his guest, villain that he was, for the gold that I carried, and secretly buried me, without funeral rites, in this house. Be gone hence, therefore, for it is accursed and unholy ground." This story is enough for the father. He takes the advice, and does not return till Tranio and his dutiful son are quite ready for him.

Great battlefields are everywhere believed to be haunted. Tacitus* relates how, when Titus was besieging Jerusalem, armies were seen fighting in the sky; and at a much later date, after a great battle against Attila and the Huns, under the walls of Rome, the ghosts of the dead fought for three days and three nights, and the clash of their arms was distinctly heard.† Marathon is no exception to the rule. Pausanias‡ says that any night you may hear horses neighing and men fighting there. To go on purpose to see the sight never brought good to any man; but with him who unwittingly lights upon it the spirits are not angry. He adds that the people of Marathon worship the men who fell in the battle as heroes; and who could be more worthy of such honour than they? The battle itself was not without its marvellous side. Epizelus, the Athenian, used to relate how a huge hoplite, whose beard overshadowed all his shield, stood over against him in the thick of the fight. The apparition passed him

* *Hist.*, v. 13.
† Damascius, *Vita Isidori*, 63.
‡ I. 32. 4.

by and killed the man next him, but Epizelus came out of the battle blind, and remained so for the rest of his life.* Plutarch† also relates of a place in Bœotia where a battle had been fought, that there is a stream running by, and that people imagine that they hear panting horses in the roaring waters.

But the strangest account of the habitual haunting of great battlefields is to be found in Philostratus's *Heroica*, which represents the spirits of the Homeric heroes as still closely connected with Troy and its neighbourhood. How far the stories are based on local tradition it is impossible to say; they are told by a vine-dresser, who declares that he lives under the protection of Protesilaus. At one time he was in danger of being violently ousted from all his property, when the ghost of Protesilaus appeared to the would-be despoiler in a vision, and struck him blind. The great man was so terrified at this event that he carried his depredations no further; and the vine-dresser has since continued to cultivate what remained of his property under the protection of the hero, with whom he lives on most intimate terms. Protesilaus often appears to him while he is at work and has long talks with him, and he keeps off wild beasts and disease from the land.

Not only Protesilaus, but also his men, and, in fact, virtually all of the "giants of the mighty bone and bold emprise" who fought round Troy, can be seen on the plain at night, clad like warriors, with nodding plumes. The inhabitants are keenly inter-

* Herod., vi. 117. † *Parallel*, 7.

ested in these apparitions, and well they may be, as so much depends upon them. If the heroes are covered with dust, a drought is impending; if with sweat, they foreshadow rain. Blood upon their arms means a plague; but if they show themselves without any distinguishing mark, all will be well.

Though the heroes are dead, they cannot be insulted with impunity. Ajax was popularly believed, owing to the form taken by his madness, to be especially responsible for any misfortune that might befall flocks and herds. On one occasion some shepherds, who had had bad luck with their cattle, surrounded his tomb and abused him, bringing up all the weak points in his earthly career recorded by Homer. At last they went too far for his patience, and a terrible voice was heard in the tomb and the clash of armour. The offenders fled in terror, but came to no harm.

On another occasion some strangers were playing at draughts near his shrine, when Ajax appeared and begged them to stop, as the game reminded him of Palamedes.

Hector was a far more dangerous person. Maximus of Tyre* says that the people of Ilium often see him bounding over the plain at dead of night in flashing armour—a truly Homeric picture. Maximus cannot, indeed, boast of having seen Hector, though he also has had his visions vouchsafed him. He had seen Castor and Pollux, like twin stars, above his ship, steering it through a storm. Æsculapius also he has

* *Dissert.*, 15. 7.

seen—not in a dream, by Hercules, but with his waking eyes. But to return to Hector. Philostratus says that one day an unfortunate boy insulted him in the same way in which the shepherds had treated Ajax. Homer, however, did not satisfy this boy, and as a parting shaft he declared that the statue in Ilium did not really represent Hector, but Achilles. Nothing happened immediately, but not long afterwards, while the boy was driving a team of ponies, Hector appeared in the form of a warrior in a brook which was, as a rule, so small as not even to have a name. He was heard shouting in a foreign tongue as he pursued the boy in the stream, finally overtaking and drowning him with his ponies. The bodies were never afterwards recovered.

Philostratus gives us a quantity of details about the Homeric heroes, which the vine-dresser has picked up in his talks with Protesilaus. Most of the heroes can be easily recognized. Achilles, for instance, enters into conversation with various people, and goes out hunting. He can be recognized by his height and his beauty and his bright armour; and as he rushes past he is usually accompanied by a whirlwind—ποδάρκης, δῖος, even after death.

Then we hear the story of the White Isle. Helen and Achilles fell in love with one another, though they had never met—the one hidden in Egypt, the other fighting before Troy. There was no place near Troy suited for their eternal life together, so Thetis appealed to Poseidon to give them an island home of their own. Poseidon consented, and the

White Isle rose up in the Black Sea, near the mouth of the Danube. There Achilles and Helen, the manliest of men and the most feminine of women, first met and first embraced; and Poseidon himself, and Amphitrite, and all the Nereids, and as many river gods and spirits as dwell near the Euxine and Mæotis, came to the wedding. The island is thickly covered with white trees and with elms, which grow in regular order round the shrine; and on it there dwell certain white birds, fragrant of the salt sea, which Achilles is said to have tamed to his will, so that they keep the glades cool, fanning them with their wings and scattering spray as they fly along the ground, scarce rising above it. To men sailing over the broad bosom of the sea the island is holy when they disembark, for it lies like a hospitable home to their ships. But neither those who sail thither, nor the Greeks and barbarians living round the Black Sea, may build a house upon it; and all who anchor and sacrifice there must go on board at sunset. No man may pass the night upon the isle, and no woman may even land there. If the wind is favourable, ships must sail away; if not, they must put out and anchor in the bay and sleep on board. For at night men say that Achilles and Helen drink together, and sing of each other's love, and of the war, and of Homer. Now that his battles are over, Achilles cultivates the gift of song he had received from Calliope. Their voices ring out clear and godlike over the water, and the sailors sit trembling with emotion as they listen. Those

who had anchored there declared that they had heard the neighing of horses, and the clash of arms, and shouts such as are raised in battle.

Maximus of Tyre* also describes the island, and tells how sailors have often seen a fair-haired youth dancing a war-dance in golden armour upon it; and how once, when one of them unwittingly slept there, Achilles woke him, and took him to his tent and entertained him. Patroclus poured the wine and Achilles played the lyre, while Thetis herself is said to have been present with a choir of other deities.

If they anchor to the north or the south of the island, and a breeze springs up that makes the harbours dangerous, Achilles warns them, and bids them change their anchorage and avoid the wind. Sailors relate how, "when they first behold the island, they embrace each other and burst into tears of joy. Then they put in and kiss the land, and go to the temple to pray and to sacrifice to Achilles." Victims stand ready of their own accord at the altar, according to the size of the ship and the number of those on board.

Pausanias also mentions the White Isle.† On one occasion, Leonymus, while leading the people of Croton against the Italian Locrians, attacked the spot where he was informed that Ajax Oïleus, on whom the people of Locris had called for help, was posted in the van. According to Conon,‡ who, by

* *Dissert.*, 15. 7. † 3. 19. 12.

‡ *Narr.*, 18.

the way, calls the hero Autoleon, when the people of Croton went to war, they also left a vacant space for Ajax in the forefront of their line. However this may be, Leonymus was wounded in the breast, and as the wound refused to heal and weakened him considerably, he applied to Delphi for advice. The god told him to sail to the White Isle, where Ajax would heal him of his wound. Thither, therefore, he went, and was duly healed. On his return he described what he had seen—how that Achilles was now married to Helen; and it was Leonymus who told Stesichorus that his blindness was due to Helen's wrath, and thus induced him to write the *Palinode*.

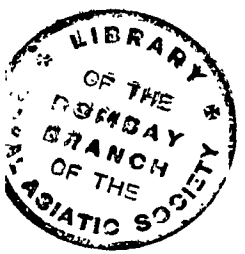
Achilles himself is once said to have appeared to a trader who frequently visited the island. They talked of Troy, and then the hero gave him wine, and bade him sail away and fetch him a certain Trojan maiden who was the slave of a citizen of Ilium. The trader was surprised at the request, and ventured to ask why he wanted a Trojan slave. Achilles replied that it was because she was of the same race as Hector and his ancestors, and of the blood of the sons of Priam and Dardanus. The trader thought that Achilles was in love with the girl, whom he duly brought with him on his next visit to the island. Achilles thanked him, and bade him keep her on board the ship, doubtless because women were not allowed to land. In the evening he was entertained by Achilles and Helen, and his host gave him a large sum of money, promising to

make him his guest-friend and to bring luck to his ship and his business. At daybreak Achilles dismissed him, telling him to leave the girl on the shore. When they had gone about a furlong from the island, a horrible cry from the maiden reached their ears, and they saw Achilles tearing her to pieces, rending her limb from limb.

In this brutal savage it is impossible to recognize Homer's chivalrous hero, who sacrificed the success of a ten years' war, fought originally for the recovery of one woman, to his grief at the loss of another, and has thus made it possible to describe the *Iliad* as the greatest love-poem ever written. One cannot help feeling that Pindar's Isle of the Blest, whither he was brought by Thetis, whose mother's prayer had moved the heart of Zeus, to dwell with Cadmus and Peleus, is Achilles' true home; or the isle of the heroes of all time, described by Carducci, where King Lear sits telling Œdipus of his sufferings, and Cordelia calls to Antigone, "Come, my Greek sister! We will sing of peace to our fathers." Helen and Iseult, silent and thoughtful, roam under the shade of the myrtles, while the setting sun kisses their golden hair with its reddening rays. Helen gazes across the sea, but King Mark opens his arms to Iseult, and the fair head sinks on the mighty beard. Clytemnestra stands by the shore with the Queen of Scots. They bathe their white arms in the waves, but the waves recoil swollen with red blood, while the wailing of the hapless women echoes along the rocky strand. Among these heroic souls Shelley

alone of modern poets—that Titan spirit in a maiden's form—may find a place, according to Carducci, caught up by Sophocles from the living embrace of Thetis.*

* G. Carducci, "Presso l' urna di P. B. Shelley," in the *Odi Barbare.*



IV

NECROMANCY

THE belief that it was possible to call up the souls of the dead by means of spells was almost universal in antiquity. We know that even Saul, who had himself cut off those that had familiar spirits and the wizards out of the land, disguised himself and went with two others to consult the witch of En-dor; that she called up the spirit of Samuel at his request; that Samuel asked Saul, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" and then prophesied his ruin and death at the hands of the Philistines at Mount Gilboa. We find frequent references to the practice in classical literature. The elder Pliny* gives us the interesting information that spirits refuse to obey people afflicted with freckles.

There were always certain spots hallowed by tradition as particularly favourable to intercourse with the dead, or even as being actual entrances to the lower world. For instance, at Heraclea in Pontus there was a famous ψυχομαντεῖον, or place where the souls of the dead could be conjured up and consulted, as Hercules was believed to have dragged

* *N. H.*, 30. 1. 16.

Cerberus up to earth here. Other places supposed to be connected with this myth had a similar legend attached to them, as also did all places where Pluto was thought to have carried off Persephone. Thus we hear of entrances to Hades at Eleusis,* at Colonus,† at Enna in Sicily,‡ and finally at the lovely pool of Cyane, up the Anapus River, near Syracuse, one of the few streams in which the papyrus still flourishes.§ Lakes and seas also were frequently believed to be entrances to Hades.‖

The existence of sulphurous fumes easily gave rise to a belief that certain places were in direct communication with the lower world. This was the case at Cumæ where Æneas consulted the Sybil, and at Colonus; while at Hierapolis in Phrygia there was a famous "Plutonium," which could only be safely approached by the priests of Cybele.¶ It was situated under a temple of Apollo, a real entrance to Hades; and it is doubtless to this that Cicero refers when he speaks of the deadly "Plutonia" he had seen in Asia.** These "Plutonia" or "Charonia" are, in fact, places where mephitic vapours exist, like the Grotto del Cane and other spots in the neighbourhood of Naples and Pozzuoli. The priests must either have become used to the fumes, or have learnt some means of counteracting them; otherwise their

* *Hymn. Orph.*, 18. 15.
† Soph., *O. C.*, 1590.
‡ Cic., *Verr.*, iv. 107.
§ Diodor., v. 4. 2.
‖ Cp. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte*, p. 815, where the whole question is discussed in great detail.
¶ Strabo, 13. 29, 30; Pliny, *N. H.*, 2. 208.
** *De Div.*, i. 79.

lives can hardly have been more pleasant than that of the unfortunate dog which used to be exhibited in the Naples grotto, though the control of these very realistic entrances to the kingdom of Pluto must have been a very profitable business, well worth a little personal inconvenience. Others are mentioned by Strabo at Magnesia and Myus,* and there was one at Cyllene, in Arcadia.

In addition to these there were numerous special temples or places where the souls of the dead, which were universally thought to possess a knowledge of the future, could be called up and consulted—*e.g.*, the temple at Phigalia, in Arcadia, used by Pausanias, the Spartan commander;† or the *νεκυομαντεῖον*, the oracle of the dead, by the River Acheron, in Threspotia, to which Periander, the famous tyrant of Corinth, had recourse;‡ and it was here, according to Pausanias, that Orpheus went down to the lower world in search of Eurydice.

Lucian§ tells us that it was only with Pluto's permission that the dead could return to life, and they were invariably accompanied by Mercury. Consequently, both these gods were regularly invoked in the prayers and spells used on such occasions. Only the souls of those recently dead were, as a rule, called up, for it was naturally held that they would feel greater interest in the world they had just left, and in the friends and relations still alive, to whom they were really attached. Not that it was impossible

* Strabo, 14, 636; 12, 579.
† Paus., 3. 17, 19.
‡ Herod., v. 92.
§ *Dial. Deor.*, 7. 4.

to evoke the ghosts of those long dead, if it was desired. Even Orpheus and Cecrops were not beyond reach of call, and Apollonius of Tyana claimed to have raised the shade of Achilles.*

All oracles were originally sacred to Persephone and Pluto, and relied largely on necromancy, a snake being the emblem of prophetic power. Hence, when Apollo, the god of light, claimed possession of the oracles as the conqueror of darkness, the snake was twined round his tripod as an emblem, and his priestess was called Pythia. When Alexander set up his famous oracle, as described by Lucian, the first step taken in establishing its reputation was the finding of a live snake in an egg in a lake. The find had, of course, been previously arranged by Alexander and his confederates.

We still possess accounts of the working of these oracles of the dead, especially of the one connected with the Lake of Avernus, near Naples. Cicero† describes how, from this lake, "shades, the spirits of the dead, are summoned in the dense gloom of the mouth of Acheron with salt blood"; and Strabo quotes the early Greek historian Ephorus as relating how, even in his day, "the priests that raise the dead from Avernus live in underground dwellings, communicating with each other by subterranean passages, through which they led those who wished to consult the oracle hidden in the bowels of the earth." "Not far from the lake of Avernus," says Maximus of Tyre, "was an oracular cave, which took its name from

* Philostr., *Apoll. Tyan.*, 4. 16. † *Tusc. Disp.*, 1. 16.

the calling up of the dead. Those who came to consult the oracle, after repeating the sacred formula and offering libations and slaying victims, called upon the spirit of the friend or relation they wished to consult. Then it appeared, an unsubstantial shade, difficult both to see and to recognize, yet endowed with a human voice and skilled in prophecy. When it had answered the questions put to it, it vanished." One is at once struck with the similarity of this account to those of the spiritualistic séances of the famous Eusapia in the same part of the world, not so very long ago. In most cases those consulting the oracle would probably be satisfied with hearing the voice of the dead man, or with a vision of him in sleep, so that some knowledge of ventriloquism or power of hypnotism or suggestion would often be ample stock-in-trade for those in charge.

This consulting of the dead must have been very common in antiquity. Both Plato* and Euripides† mention it; and the belief that the dead have a knowledge of the future, which seems to be ingrained in human nature, gave these oracles great power. Thus, Cicero tells‡ us that Appius often consulted "soul-oracles" (psychomantia), and also mentions a man having recourse to one when his son was seriously ill.§ The poets have, of course, made free use of this supposed prophetic power of the dead. The shade of Polydorus, for instance, speaks the

* *Leg.*, x. 909B.
† *Alc.*, 1128.
‡ *De Div.*, i. 58.
§ *Tusc.*, i. 48.

prologue of the Hecuba, while the appearance of the dead Creusa in the *Æneid* is known to everyone. In the *Persæ*, Æschylus makes the shade of Darius ignorant of all that has happened since his death, and is thus able to introduce his famous description of the battle of Salamis; but Darius, nevertheless, possesses a knowledge of the future, and can therefore give us an equally vivid account of the battle of Platæa, which had not yet taken place. The shade of Clytemnestra in the *Eumenides*, however, does not prophesy.

Pliny mentions the belief that the dead had prophetic powers, but declares that they could not always be relied on, as the following instance proves.* During the Sicilian war, Gabienus, the bravest man in Cæsar's fleet, was captured by Sextus Pompeius, and beheaded by his orders. For a whole day the corpse lay upon the shore, the head almost severed from the body. Then, towards evening, a large crowd assembled, attracted by his groans and prayers; and he begged Sextus Pompeius either to come to him himself or to send some of his friends; for he had returned from the dead, and had something to tell him. Pompeius sent friends, and Gabienus informed them that Pompeius's cause found favour with the gods below, and was the right cause, and that he was bidden to announce that all would end as he wished. To prove the truth of what he said, he announced that he would die immediately, as he actually did.

* Pliny, *N. H.*, 7. 52, 178.

This knowledge of the future by the dead is to be found in more than one well-authenticated modern ghost story, where the apparition would seem to have manifested itself for the express purpose of warning those whom it has loved on earth of approaching danger. We may take, for instance, the story* where a wife, who is lying in bed with her husband, suddenly sees a gentleman dressed in full naval uniform sitting on the bed. She was too astonished for fear, and waked her husband, who "for a second or two lay looking in intense astonishment at the intruder; then, lifting himself a little, he shouted: 'What on earth are you doing here, sir?' Meanwhile the form, slowly drawing himself into an upright position, now said in a commanding, yet reproachful voice, 'Willie! Willie!' and then vanished." Her husband got up, unlocked the door, and searched the house, but found nothing. On his return he informed his wife that the form was that of his father, whom she had never seen. He had left the navy before this son was born, and the son had, therefore, only seen his father in uniform a very few times. It afterwards came out that her husband was about to engage in some speculations which, had he done so, would have proved his ruin; but, fortunately, this vision of his father made such an impression on him that he abandoned the idea altogether.

Lucan† describes how Sextus Pompeius went to consult Erichtho, one of the famous Thessalian

* Myers, *Human Personality*, ii. 328, 329.
† *Pharsal.*, vi. *ad fin.*

witches, as to the prospects of his father's success against Cæsar, during the campaign that ended in the disastrous defeat at Pharsalia. It is decided that a dead man must be called back to life, and Erichtho goes out to where a recent skirmish has taken place, and chooses the body of a man whose throat had been cut, which was lying there unburied. She drags it back to her cave, and fills its breast with warm blood. She has chosen a man recently dead, because his words are more likely to be clear and distinct, which might not be the case with one long accustomed to the world below. She then washes it, uses various magic herbs and potions, and prays to the gods of the lower world. At last she sees the shade of the man, whose lifeless body lies stretched before her, standing close by and gazing upon the limbs it had left and the hated bonds of its former prison. Furious at the delay and the slow working of her spells, she seizes a live serpent and lashes the corpse with it. Even the last boon of death, the power of dying, is denied the poor wretch. Slowly the life returns to the body, and Erichtho promises that if the man speaks the truth she will bury him so effectually that no spells will ever be able to call him back to life again. He is weak and faint, like a dying man, but finally tells her all she wishes to know, and dies once again. She fulfills her promise and burns the body, using every kind of magic spell to make it impossible for anyone to trouble the shade again. Indeed, it seems to have been unusual to summon a shade from the lower world more than

once, except in the case of very famous persons. This kind of magic was nearly always carried on at night. Statius* has also given us a long and characteristically elaborate account of the calling up of the shade of Laius by Eteocles and Tiresias.

Apuleius,† in his truly astounding account of Thessaly in his day, gives a detailed description of the process of calling back a corpse to life. "The prophet then took a certain herb and laid it thrice upon the mouth of the dead man, placing another upon the breast. Then, turning himself to the east with a silent prayer for the help of the holy sun, he drew the attention of the audience to the great miracle he was performing. Gradually the breast of the corpse began to swell in the act of breathing, the arteries to pulsate, and the body to be filled with life. Finally the dead man sat up and asked why he had been brought back to life and not left in peace."

One is reminded of the dead man being carried out to burial who meets Dionysus in Hades, in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, and expresses the wish that he may be struck alive again if he does what is requested of him. If ghosts are often represented as "all loath to leave the body that they love," they are generally quite as loath to return to it, when once they have left it, though whether it is the process of returning or the continuance of a life which they have left that is distasteful to them is not very clear. The painfulness of the process of restoration to life after drowning seems to favour the former explanation.

* *Theb.*, 4. 405 *ff.*

† *Met.*, ii. 28.

These cases of resurrection are, of course, quite different from ordinary necromancy—the summoning of the shade of a dead man from the world below, in order to ask its advice with the help of a professional diviner. As religious faith decayed and the superstitions of the East and the belief in magic gained ground, necromancy became more and more common. Even Cicero charges Vatinius* with evoking the souls of the dead, and with being in the habit of sacrificing the entrails of boys to the Manes. Tacitus mentions a young man trying to raise the dead by means of incantations,† while Pliny‡ speaks of necromancy as a recognized branch of magic, and Origen classes it among the crimes of the magicians in his own day.

After murdering his mother, Nero often declared that he was troubled by her spirit and by the lashes and blazing torches of the Furies.§ One would imagine that the similarity of his crime and his punishment to those of Orestes would have been singularly gratifying to a man of Nero's theatrical temperament; yet we are informed that he often tried to call up her ghost and lay it with the help of magic rites. Nero, however, took particular pleasure in raising the spirits of the dead, according to the Elder Pliny,‖ who adds that not even the charms of his own singing and acting had greater attractions for him.

Caracalla, besides his bodily illnesses, was obviously

* *In Vat.*, 6. † *An.*, ii. 28. ‡ *N. H.*, 30. 5.
§ Suet., *Nero*, 34. ‖ *N. H.*, 30. 5

insane and often troubled with delusions, imagining that he was being driven out by his father and also by his brother Geta, whom he had murdered in his mother's arms, and that they pursued him with drawn swords in their hands. At last, as a desperate resource, he endeavoured to find a cure by means of necromancy, and called up, among others, the shade of his father, Septimius Severus, as well as that of Commodus. But they all refused to speak to him, with the exception of Commodus; and it was even rumoured that the shade of Severus was accompanied by that of the murdered Geta, though it had not been evoked by Caracalla. Nor had Commodus any comfort for him. He only terrified the suffering Emperor the more by his ominous words.*

Philostratus† has described for us a famous interview which Apollonius of Tyana maintained that he had had with the shade of Achilles. The philosopher related that it was not by digging a trench nor by shedding the blood of rams, like Odysseus, that he raised the ghost of Achilles; but by prayers such as the Indians are said to make to their heroes. In his prayer to Achilles he said that, unlike most men, he did not believe that the great warrior was dead, any more than his master Pythagoras had done; and he begged him to show himself. Then there was a slight earthquake shock, and a beautiful youth stood before him, nine feet in height, wearing a Thessalian cloak. He did not look like a boaster, as some men had thought him, and his expression,

* Dio Cassius, 77. 15. † *Apollon. Tyan.*, 4. 16.

if grim, was not unpleasant. No words could describe his beauty, which surpassed anything imaginable. Meanwhile he had grown to be twenty feet high, and his beauty increased in proportion. His hair he had never cut. Apollonius was allowed to ask him five questions, and accordingly asked for information on five of the most knotty points in the history of the Trojan War—whether Helen was really in Troy, why Homer never mentions Palamedes, etc. Achilles answered him fully and correctly in each instance. Then suddenly the cock crew, and, like Hamlet's father, he vanished from Apollonius's sight.

V

VISIONS OF THE DEAD IN SLEEP

In most of the Greek and Roman stories that survive, the wraiths of the dead are represented as revisiting their friends on earth in sleep. These instances I have not, as a rule, troubled to collect, for they cannot strictly be classed as ghost stories; but since the influence of the dead was generally considered to be exercised in this way, I shall give a few stories which seem particularly striking. That it was widely believed that the dead could return at night to those whom they loved is proved by the touching inscription in which a wife begs that her husband may sometimes be allowed to revisit her in sleep, and that she may soon join him.

The most interesting passage that has come down to us, dealing with the whole question of the power of the dead to appear to those whom they love in dreams, is undoubtedly Quintilian's Tenth Declamation. The fact that the greatest teacher of rhetoric of his day actually chose it as a subject for one of his model speeches shows how important a part it must have played in the feelings of educated Romans of the time. The story is as follows.

A mother was plunged in grief at the loss of her favourite son, when, on the night of the funeral, which had been long delayed at her earnest request, the boy appeared to her in a vision, and remained with her all night, kissing her and fondling her as if he were alive. He did not leave her till daybreak. "All that survives of a son," says Quintilian, "will remain in close communion with his mother when he dies." In her unselfishness, she begs her son not to withhold the comfort which he has brought to her from his father. But the father, when he hears the story, does not at all relish the idea of a visit from his son's ghost, and is, in fact, terrified at the prospect. He says nothing to the mother, who had moved the gods of the world above no less than those of the world below by the violence of her grief and the importunity of her prayers, but at once sends for a sorcerer. As soon as he arrives, the sorcerer is taken to the family tomb, which has its place in the city of the dead that stretches along the highway from the town gate. The magic spell is wound about the grave, and the urn is finally sealed with the dread words, until at last the hapless boy has become, in very truth, a lifeless shade. Finally, we are told, the sorcerer threw himself upon the urn itself and breathed his spells into the very bones and ashes. This at least he admitted, as he looked up: "The spirit resists. Spells are not enough. We must close the grave completely and bind the stones together with iron." His suggestions are carried out, and at last he declares that all has been accomplished

successfully. "Now he is really dead. He cannot appear or come out. This night will prove the truth of my words." The boy never afterwards appeared, either to his mother or to anyone else.

The mother is beside herself with grief. Her son's spirit, which had successfully baffled the gods of the lower world in its desire to visit her, is now, thanks to these foreign spells, dashing itself against the top of the grave, unable to understand the weight that has been placed upon it to keep it from escaping. Not only do the spells shut the boy in—he might possibly have broken through these—but the iron bands and solid fastenings have once again brought him face to face with death. This very realistic, if rather material, picture of a human soul mewed up for ever in the grave gives us a clear idea of the popular belief in Rome about the future life, and enables us to realize the full meaning of the inscription, "Sit tibi terra levis" (May the earth press lightly upon thee), which is so common upon Roman tombs as often to be abbreviated to "S.T.T.L."

The speech is supposed to be delivered in an action for cruelty * brought by the wife against her husband, and in the course of it the father is spoken of as a parricide for what he has done. He defends himself by saying that he took the steps which are the cause of the action for his wife's peace of mind. To this plea it is answered that the ghost of a son could never frighten a mother, though other spirits, if unknown to her, might conceivably do so.

* Malæ tractationis.

In the course of the speech we are told that the spirit, when freed from the body, bathes itself in fire and makes for its home among the stars, where other fates await it. Then it remembers the body in which it once dwelt. Hence the dead return to visit those who once were dear to them on earth, and become oracles, and give us timely warnings, and are conscious of the victims we offer them, and welcome the honours paid them at their tombs.

The Declamation ends, like most Roman speeches, with an appeal: in this case to the sorcerer and the husband to remove the spells; especially to the sorcerer, who has power to torture the gods above and the spirits of the dead; who, by the terror of his midnight cries, can move the deepest caves, can shake the very foundations of the earth. "You are able both to call up the spirits that serve you and to act as their cruel and ruthless gaoler. Listen for once to a mother's prayers, and let them soften your heart."

Then we have the story of Thrasyllus, as told by Apuleius,* which is thoroughly modern in its romantic tone. He was in love with the wife of his friend, Tlepolemus, whom he treacherously murdered while out hunting. His crime is not discovered, and he begins to press his suit for her hand to her parents almost immediately. The widow's grief is heart-rending. She refuses food and altogether neglects herself, hoping that the gods will hear her prayer and allow her to rejoin her husband. At last, however,

* *Met.*, viii. 4.

she is persuaded by her parents, at Thrasyllus's instance, to give ordinary care to her own health. But she passes her days before the likeness of the deceased, which she has had made in the image of that of the god Liber, paying it divine honours and finding her one comfort in thus fomenting her own sufferings.

When she hears of Thrasyllus's suit, she rejects it with scorn and horror; and then at night her dead husband appears to her and describes exactly what happened, and begs her to avenge him. She requires no urging, and almost immediately decides on the course that her vengeance shall take. She has Thrasyllus informed that she cannot come to any definite decision till her year of mourning is over. Meanwhile, however, she consents to receive his visits at night, and promises to arrange for her old nurse to let him in. Overjoyed at his success, Thrasyllus comes at the hour appointed, and is duly admitted by the old nurse. The house is in complete darkness, but he is given a cup of wine and left to himself. The wine has been drugged, however, and he sinks into a deep slumber. Then Tlepolemus's widow comes and triumphs over her enemy, who has fallen so easily into her hands. She will not kill him as he killed her husband. "Neither the peace of death nor the joy of life shall be yours," she exclaims. "You shall wander like a restless shade between Orcus and the light of day. . . . The blood of your eyes I shall offer up at the tomb of my beloved Tlepolemus, and with them I shall propitiate his

blessed spirit." At these words she takes a pin from her hair and blinds him. Then she rushes through the streets, with a sword in her hand to frighten anyone who might try to stop her, to her husband's tomb, where, after telling all her story, she slays herself.

Thither Thrasyllus followed her, declaring that he dedicated himself to the Manes of his own free-will. He carefully shut the tomb upon himself, and starved himself to death.

This is by far the best of the stories in which we find a vision of the dead in sleep playing an important part; but there is also the well-known tale of the Byzantine maiden Cleonice.* She was of high birth, but had the misfortune to attract the attention of the Spartan Pausanias, who was in command of the united Greek fleet at the Hellespont after the battle of Platæa. Like many Spartans, when first brought into contact with real luxury after his frugal upbringing at home, he completely lost his mental balance, and grew intoxicated with the splendour of his position, endeavouring to imitate the Persians in their manners, and even aspiring, it is said, to become tyrant of the whole of Greece. Cleonice was brutally torn from her parents and brought to his room at night. He was asleep at the time, and being awakened by the noise, he imagined that someone had broken into his room with the object of murdering him, and snatched up a sword and killed her. After this her ghost appeared to him

* Plutarch, *Cimon*, Chap. VI.

every night, bidding him "go to the fate which pride and lust prepare." He is said to have visited a temple at Heraclea, where he had her spirit called up and implored her pardon. She duly appeared, and told him that "he would soon be delivered from all his troubles after his return to Sparta"—an ambiguous way of prophesying his death, which occurred soon afterwards. She was certainly avenged in the manner of it.

Before leaving these stories of visions of the dead, we must not omit to mention that charming poem of Virgil's younger days, the *Culex* (The Gnat). Just as the first sketch of Macaulay's famous character of William III. is said to be contained in a Cambridge prize essay on the subject, so the *Culex* contains the first draft of some of the greatest passages in Virgil's later works — the beautiful description of the charms of country life in the *Georgics*, for instance, and the account of Tartarus in the sixth book of the *Æneid*. The story is slight, as was usually the case in these little epics, where the purple patches are more important than the plot. A shepherd falls asleep in the shade by a cool fountain, just as he would do in Southern Italy to-day, for his rest after the midday meal. Suddenly a snake, the horrors of which are described with a vividness that is truly Virgilian, appears upon the scene and prepares to strike the shepherd. A passing gnat, the hero of the poem, sees the danger, and wakes the shepherd by stinging him in the eye. He springs up angrily, brushes it off with his hand,

and dashes it lifeless to the ground. Then, to his horror, he sees the snake, and promptly kills it with the branch of a tree.

While he lies asleep that night, the ghost of the gnat appears to him in a dream, and bitterly reproaches him for the cruel death with which it has been rewarded for its heroic services. Charon has now claimed it for his own. It goes on to give a lurid description of the horrors of Tartarus, and contrasts its hard lot with that of the shepherd. When he wakes, the shepherd is filled with remorse for his conduct and is also, perhaps, afraid of being continually haunted by the ghost of his tiny benefactor. He therefore sets to work to raise a mound in honour of the gnat, facing it with marble. Round it he plants all kinds of flowers, especially violets and roses, the flowers usually offered to the dead, and cuts on a marble slab the following inscription: "Little gnat, the shepherd dedicates to thee thy meed of a tomb in return for the life thou gavest him."*

There is also an interesting story of Pindar, told by Pausanias.† In his old age the great poet dreamt that Persephone appeared to him and told him that she alone of all the goddesses had not been celebrated in song by him, but that he should pay the debt when he came to her. Shortly after this he died. There was, however, a relation of his, a woman then

* "Parve culex, pecudum custos tibi tale merenti
Funeris officium vitæ pro munere reddit."

† 9. 21. 3.

far advanced in years, who had practised the singing of most of his hymns. To her Pindar appeared in a dream and sang the hymn to Proserpine, which she wrote down from memory when she awoke.

I have included one or two stories of apparitions in dreams among those in the next section, as they seemed to be more in place there.

VI

APPARITIONS OF THE DEAD

AMONG the tall stories in Lucian's *Philopseudus** is an amusing account of a man whose wife, whom he loved dearly, appeared to him after she had been dead for twenty days. He had given her a splendid funeral, and had burnt everything she possessed with her. One day, as he was sitting quietly reading the Phædo, she suddenly appeared to him, to the terror of his son. As soon as he saw her he embraced her tearfully, a fact which seems to show that she was of a more substantial build than the large majority of ghosts of the ancient world; but she strictly forbade him to make any sound whatever. She then explained that she had come to upbraid the unfortunate man for having neglected to burn one of her golden slippers with her at the funeral. It had fallen behind the chest, she explained, and had been forgotten and not placed upon the pyre with the other. While they were talking, a confounded little Maltese puppy suddenly began to bark from under the bed, when she vanished. But the slipper was found exactly where she had described, and was duly

* *Philops.*, 27.

burnt on the following day. The story is refreshingly human.

This question of dress seems to have been a not infrequent source of anxiety to deceased ladies in the ancient world. Periander,* the tyrant of Corinth, on one occasion wished to consult his wife's spirit upon a very important matter; but she replied, as she had doubtless often done when alive, that she would not answer his questions till she had some decent clothes to wear. Periander waited for a great festival, when he knew that all the women of Corinth would be assembled in their best, and then gave orders that they should one and all strip themselves. He burnt the clothes on a huge pyre in his wife's honour; and one can imagine his satisfaction at feeling that he had at last settled the question for ever. He applied to his wife once more with a clear conscience, when she gave him an unmistakable sign that she was speaking the truth, and answered his questions as he desired.

That small household matters may weigh heavily upon a woman's conscience, even nowadays, is shown by the following interesting story, which may well be compared with the foregoing.† In July, 1838, a Catholic priest, who had gone to Perth to take charge of a mission, was called upon by a Presbyterian woman. For many weeks past, she explained, she had been anxious to see a priest. A woman, lately dead, whom she knew very slightly, had appeared to her during the night for several nights,

* Herod., v. 92.

† *Human Personality*, ii. 348.

urging her to go to a priest and ask him to pay three shillings and tenpence to a person not specified.

The priest made inquiries, and learnt that the deceased had acted as washerwoman and followed the regiment. At last, after careful search, he found a grocer with whom she had dealt, and, on being asked whether a female of the name owed him anything, the grocer turned up his books and informed him that she owed him three shillings and tenpence. He paid the sum. Subsequently the Presbyterian woman came to him, saying that she was no more troubled.

The spirits of the worst of the Roman Emperors were, as we should expect, especially restless. Pliny* tells us how Fannius, who was engaged upon a Life of Nero, was warned by him of his approaching death. He was lying on his couch at dead of night with a writing-desk in front of him, when Nero came and sat down by his side, took up the first book he had written on his evil deeds, and read it through to the end; and so on with the second and the third. Then he vanished. Fannius was terrified, for he thought the vision implied that he would never get beyond the third book of his work, and this actually proved to be the case.

Nero, in fact, had a romantic charm about him, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the wild recklessness of his life; and he possessed the redeeming feature of artistic taste. Like Francis I. of France,

* *Ep.*, v. 5.

or our own Charles II., he was irresistible with the ladies, and must have been the darling of all the housemaids of Rome. People long refused to believe in his death, and for many years it was confidently affirmed that he would appear again. His ghost was long believed to walk in Rome, and the church of Santa Maria del Popolo is said to have been built as late as 1099 by Pope Paschalis II. on the site of the tombs of the Domitii, where Nero was buried, near the modern Porta del Popolo, where the Via Flaminia entered the city, in order to lay his restless shade.

Caligula also appeared shortly after his death, and frequently disturbed the keepers of the Lamian Gardens, for his body had been hastily buried there without due ceremony. Not till his sisters, who really loved him, in spite of his many faults, had returned from exile were the funeral rites properly performed, after which his ghost gave no more trouble.*

On the night of the day of Galba's murder, the Emperor Otho was heard groaning in his room by his attendants. They rushed in, and found him lying in front of his bed, endeavouring to propitiate Galba's ghost, by whom he declared that he saw himself being driven out and expelled.† Otho was a strange mixture of superstition and scepticism, for when he started on his last fatal expedition he treated the unfavourable omens with contempt. By this time, however, he may have become desperate.

* Suet., *Gaius*, 59.

† Suet., *Otho*, 7.

Moreover, irreligious people are notoriously superstitious, and at this period it would be very difficult to say just where religion ended and superstition began.

We have one or two ghost stories connected with early Greek mythology. Cillas, the charioteer of Pelops, though Trœzenius gives his name as Sphærus, died on the way to Pisa, and appeared to Pelops by night, begging that he might be duly buried. Pelops took pity on him and burnt* his body with all ceremony, raised a huge mound in his honour, and built a chapel to the Cillean Apollo near it. He also named a town after him. Strabo even says that there was a mound in Cillas' honour at Crisa in the Troad. This dutiful attention did not go unrewarded. Cillas appeared to Pelops again, and thanked him for all he had done, and to Cillas also he is said to have owed the information by which he was able to overthrow Œnomaus in the famous chariot race which won him the hand of Hippodamia. Pelops' shameless ingratitude to Œnomaus's charioteer, Myrtilus, who had removed the pin of his master's chariot, and thus caused his defeat and death in order to help Pelops, on the promise of the half of the kingdom, is hardly in accordance with his treatment of Cillas, though it is thoroughly Greek. However, on the theory that a man who betrays one master will probably betray another, especially if he is to be rewarded for his treachery with as much as

* If that is the meaning of ἐξερρύνπάρου in the Homeric Scholia of Theopompus.

half a kingdom, Pelops was right in considering that Myrtilus was best out of the way; and he can hardly have foreseen the curse that was to fall upon his family in consequence.

With this story we may compare the well-known tale of the poet Simonides, who found an unknown corpse on the shore, and honoured it with burial.* Soon afterwards he happened to be on the point of starting on a voyage, when the man whom he had buried appeared to him in a dream, and warned him on no account to go by the ship he had chosen, as it would undoubtedly be wrecked. Impressed by the vision, the poet remained behind, and the ship went down soon afterwards, with all on board. Simonides expressed his gratitude in a poem describing the event, and in several epigrams. Libanius even goes so far as to place the scene of the event at Tarentum, where he was preparing to take ship for Sicily.

The tale is probably mythical. It belongs to a group of stories of the grateful dead, which have been the subject of an interesting book recently published by the Folk-Lore Society.† Mr. Gerould doubts whether it really belongs to the cycle, as it is nearly two centuries earlier, even in Cicero's version, than any other yet discovered; but it certainly inspired Chaucer in his Nun's Priest's Tale, and it may well have influenced other later versions. The Jewish version is closer to the Simonides story than

* Cic., *De Div.*, i. 27, 56. Cp. Val. Max., i. 7; Libanius, iv. 1101.

† *The Grateful Dead*, by G. H. Gerould.

any of the others, and I will quote it in Mr. Gerould's words.*

"The son of a rich merchant of Jerusalem sets off after his father's death to see the world. At Stamboul he finds hanging in chains the body of a Jew, which the Sultan has commanded to be left there till his co-religionists shall have repaid the sum that the man is suspected of having stolen from his royal master. The hero pays this sum, and has the corpse buried. Later, during a storm at sea he is saved by a stone, on which he is brought to land, whence he is carried by an eagle back to Jerusalem. There a white-clad man appears to him, explaining that he is the ghost of the dead, and that he has already appeared as stone and eagle. The spirit further promises the hero a reward for his good deed in the present and in the future life."

This is one of the simplest forms in which the story appears. It is generally found compounded with some other similar tale; but the main facts are that a man buries a corpse found on the sea-shore from philanthropic motives. "Later he is met by the ghost of the dead man, who in many cases promises him help on condition of receiving, in return, half of whatever he gets. The hero obtains a wife (or some other reward), and, when called upon, is ready to fulfil his bargain as to sharing his possessions,"† not excepting the wife. Some of the characteristics of the tale are to be found in the

* *The Grateful Dead*, p. 27.
† *Ibid.*, p. 10.

story of Pelops and Cillas, related above, which Mr. Gerould does not mention.

Pausanias* has a story of one of Ulysses' crew. Ulysses' ship was driven about by the winds from one city to another in Sicily and Italy, and in the course of these wanderings it touched at Tecmessa. Here one of the sailors got drunk and ravished a maiden, and was stoned to death in consequence by the indignant people of the town. Ulysses did not trouble about what had occurred, and sailed away. Soon, however, the ghost of the murdered man became a source of serious annoyance to the people of the place, killing the inhabitants of the town, regardless of age and sex. Finally, matters came to such a pass that the town was abandoned. But the Pythian priestess bade the people return to Tecmessa and appease the hero by building him a temple and precinct of his own, and giving him every year the fairest maiden of the town to wife. They took this advice, and there was no more trouble from the ghost. It chanced, however, that Euthymus came to Tecmessa just when the people were paying the dead sailor the annual honours. Learning how matters stood, he asked to be allowed to go into the temple and see the maiden. At their meeting he was first touched with pity, and then immediately fell desperately in love with her. The girl swore to be his, if he would save her. Euthymus put on his armour and awaited the attack of the monster. He had the best of the fight, and the ghost, driven from

* 6. 6. 7.

its home, plunged into the sea. The wedding was, of course, celebrated with great splendour, and nothing more was heard of the spirit of the drunken sailor. The story is obviously to be classed with that of Ariadne.

The god-fearing Ælian seeks to show that Providence watches over a good man and brings his murderers to justice by a story taken from Chrysippus.* A traveller put up at an inn in Megara, wearing a belt full of gold. The innkeeper discovered that he had the money about him, and murdered him at night, having arranged to carry his body outside the gates in a dung-cart. But meanwhile the murdered man appeared to a citizen of the town and told him what had happened. The man was impressed by the vision. Investigations were made, and the murderer was caught exactly where the ghost had indicated, and was duly punished.

This is one of the very few stories in which the apparition is seen at or near the moment of death, as is the case in the vast majority of the well-authenticated cases collected during recent years.

Aristeas of Proconesus, a man of high birth, died quite suddenly in a fulling establishment in his native town.† The owner locked the building and went to inform his relatives, when a man from Cyzicus, hearing the news, denied it, saying that Aristeas had met him on the way thither and talked to him; and when the relatives came, prepared to remove the body, they found no Aristeas, either

* Ælian, *Fragm.*, 82. † Herod., iv. 14, 15.

alive or dead. Altogether, he seems to have been a remarkable person. He disappeared for seven years, and then appeared in Proconesus and wrote an epic poem called *Arimispea*, which was well known in Herodotus's day. Two hundred and forty years later he was seen again, this time at Metapontum, and bade the citizens build a shrine to Apollo, and near it erect a statue to himself, as Apollo would come to them alone of the Italian Greeks, and he would be seen following in the form of a raven. The townsmen were troubled at the apparition, and consulted the Delphic oracle, which confirmed all that Aristeas had said; and Apollo received his temple and Aristeas his statue in the market-place.

Apollonius* tells virtually the same story, except that in his version Aristeas was seen giving a lesson in literature by a number of persons in Sicily at the very hour he died in Proconesus. He says that Aristeas appeared at intervals for a number of years after his death. The elder Pliny† also speaks of Aristeas, saying that at Proconesus his soul was seen to leave his body in the form of a raven, though he regards the tale as in all probability a fabrication.

The doctor in Lucian's *Philopseudus* (*c.* 26) declares that he knew a man who rose from the dead twenty days after he was buried, and that he attended him after his resurrection. But when asked how it was the body did not decompose or the man die of hunger, he has no answer to give.

* *Hist. Mir.*, 11. † *N. H.*, 7. 52. 174.

Dio Cassius* describes how, when Nero wished to cut a canal through the Isthmus of Corinth, blood spurted up in front of those who first touched the earth, groans and cries were heard, and a number of ghosts appeared. Not till Nero took a pickaxe and began to work himself, to encourage the men, was any real progress made.

Pliny† quotes an interesting account, from Hermotimus of Clazomenæ, of a man whose soul was in the habit of leaving his body and wandering abroad, as was proved by the fact that he would often describe events which had happened at a distance, and could only be known to an actual eyewitness. His body meanwhile lay like that of a man in a trance or half dead. One day, however, some enemies of his took the body while in this state and burnt it, thus, to use Pliny's phrase, leaving the soul no sheath‡ to which it could return.

No one can help being struck by the bald and meagre character of these stories as a whole. They possess few of the qualities we expect to find in a good modern ghost story. None of them can equal in pathetic beauty many of those to be found in Myers's *Human Personality*. Take, for example, the story of the lady§ who was waked in the night by the sound of moaning and sobbing, as of someone in great distress of mind. Finding nothing in her room, she went and looked out of the landing window, "and there, on the grass, was a very

* 67. 16. † *N. H.*, 7. 52. 174. ‡ Vagina.
§ *Human Personality*, ii. 383.

beautiful young girl in a kneeling posture before a soldier, in a General's uniform, clasping her hands together and entreating for pardon; but, alas! he only waived her away from him."

The story proved to be true. The youngest daughter of the old and distinguished family to which the house had belonged had had an illegitimate child. Her parents and relations refused to have anything more to do with her, and she died broken-hearted. The lady who relates the story saw the features so clearly on this occasion that she afterwards recognized the soldier's portrait some six months later, when calling at a friend's house, and exclaimed: "Why, look! There is the General!" as soon as she noticed it.

One really beautiful ghost story has, however, come down to us.* Phlegon of Tralles was a freedman of the Emperor Hadrian. His work is not of great merit. The following is a favourable specimen of his stories. A monstrous child was born in Ætolia, after the death of its father, Polycrates. At a public meeting, where it was proposed to do away with it, the father suddenly appeared, and begged that the child might be given him. An attempt was made to seize the father, but he snatched up the child, tore it to pieces, and devoured all but the head. When it was proposed to consult the Delphic oracle on the matter, the head prophesied to the crowd from where it lay on the ground.

Then comes the following story. The early part

* Phlegon of Tralles, *De Rebus Mirabilibus, ad fin.*

is missing, but Erwin Rohde, in an interesting article,* has cleared up all the essential details. Proclus's treatises on Plato's Republic are complete only in the Vatican manuscripts. Of these Mai only published fragments,† but an English theologian, Alexander Morus, took notes from the manuscript when it was in Florence, and quoted from it in a commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews.‡ One of the treatises is called *πῶς δεῖ νοεῖν εἰσιέναι καὶ ἐξιέναι ψυχὴν ἀπὸ σώματος*. The ending in Phlegon § proves that the story was given in the form of a letter, and we learn that the scene was laid at Amphipolis, on the Strymon, and that the account was sent by Hipparchus in a letter to Arrhidæus, half-brother of Alexander the Great, the events occurring during the reign of Philip II. of Macedon. Proclus says that his information is derived from letters, "some written by Hipparchus, others by Arrhidæus."

Philinnion was the daughter of Demostratus and Charito. She had been married to Craterus, Alexander's famous General, but had died six months after her marriage. As we learn that she was desperately in love with Machates, a foreign friend from Pella who had come to see Demostratus, the misery of her position may possibly have caused her death. But her love conquered death itself, and she returned to life again six months after she had died, and lived with Machates, visiting him for several

* *Rhein. Mus.*, vol. xxxii., p. 329.
† Mai, *Script. Vet. Nov. Coll.*, ii. 671.
‡ London, 1616.
§ *ἐῤῥέω*.

nights. One day an old nurse went to the guest-chamber, and as the lamp was burning, she saw a woman sitting by Machates. Scarcely able to contain herself at this extraordinary occurrence, she ran to the girl's mother, calling: 'Charito! Demostratus!' and bade them get up and go with her to their daughter, for by the grace of the gods she had appeared alive, and was with the stranger in the guest-chamber.

"On hearing this extraordinary story, Charito was at first overcome by it and by the nurse's excitement; but she soon recovered herself, and burst into tears at the mention of her daughter, telling the old woman she was out of her senses, and ordering her out of the room. The nurse was indignant at this treatment, and boldly declared that she was not out of her senses, but that Charito was unwilling to see her daughter because she was afraid. At last Charito consented to go to the door of the guest-chamber, but as it was now quite two hours since she had heard the news, she arrived too late, and found them both asleep. The mother bent over the woman's figure, and thought she recognized her daughter's features and clothes. Not feeling sure, as it was dark, she decided to keep quiet for the present, meaning to get up early and catch the woman. If she failed, she would ask Machates for a full explanation, as he would never tell her a lie in a case so important. So she left the room without saying anything.

"But early on the following morning, either

because the gods so willed it or because she was moved by some divine impulse, the woman went away without being observed. When she came to him, Charito was angry with the young man in consequence, and clung to his knees, and conjured him to speak the truth and hide nothing from her. At first he was greatly distressed, and could hardly be brought to admit that the girl's name was Philinnion. Then he described her first coming and the violence of her passion, and told how she had said that she was there without her parents' knowledge. The better to establish the truth of his story, he opened a coffer and took out the things she had left behind her—a ring of gold which she had given him, and a belt which she had left on the previous night. When Charito beheld all these convincing proofs, she uttered a piercing cry, and rent her clothes and her cloak, and tore her coif from her head, and began to mourn for her daughter afresh in the midst of her friends. Machates was deeply distressed on seeing what had happened, and how they were all mourning, as if for her second funeral. He begged them to be comforted, and promised them that they should see her if she appeared. Charito yielded, but bade him be careful how he fulfilled his promise.

"When night fell and the hour drew near at which Philinnion usually appeared, they were on the watch for her. She came, as was her custom, and sat down upon the bed. Machates made no pretence, for he was genuinely anxious to sift the

matter to the bottom, and secretly sent some slaves to call her parents. He himself could hardly believe that the woman who came to him so regularly at the same hour was really dead, and when she ate and drank with him, he began to suspect what had been suggested to him—namely, that some grave-robbers had violated the tomb and sold the clothes and the gold ornaments to her father.

"Demostratus and Charito hastened to come at once, and when they saw her, they were at first speechless with amazement. Then, with cries of joy, they threw themselves upon their daughter. But Philinnion remained cold. 'Father and mother,' she said, 'cruel indeed have ye been in that ye grudged my living with the stranger for three days in my father's house, for it brought harm to no one. But ye shall pây for your meddling with sorrow. I must return to the place appointed for me, though I came not hither without the will of Heaven.' With these words she fell down dead, and her body lay stretched upon the bed. Her parents threw themselves upon her, and the house was filled with confusion and sorrow, for the blow was heavy indeed; but the event was strange, and soon became known throughout the town, and finally reached my ears.

"During the night I kept back the crowds that gathered round the house, taking care that there should be no disturbance as the news spread. At early dawn the theatre was full. After a long discussion it was decided that we should go and open the tomb, to see whether the body was still on the

bier, or whether we should find the place empty, for the woman had hardly been dead six months. When we opened the vault where all her family was buried, the bodies were seen lying on the other biers; but on the one where Philinnion had been placed, we found only the iron ring which had belonged to her lover and the gilt drinking-cup Machates had given her on the first day. In utter amazement, we went straight to Demostratus's house to see whether the body was still there. We beheld it lying on the ground, and then went in a large crowd to the place of assembly, for the whole event was of great importance and absolutely past belief. Great was the confusion, and no one could tell what to do, when Hyllus, who is not only considered the best diviner among us, but is also a great authority on the interpretation of the flight of birds, and is generally well versed in his art, got up and said that the woman must be buried outside the boundaries of the city, for it was unlawful that she should be laid to rest within them; and that Hermes Chthonius and the Eumenides should be propitiated, and that all pollution would thus be removed. He ordered the temples to be re-consecrated and the usual rites to be performed in honour of the gods below. As for the King, in this affair, he privately told me to sacrifice to Hermes, and to Zeus Xenius, and to Ares, and to perform these duties with the utmost care. We have done as he suggested.

"The stranger Machates, who was visited by the ghost, has committed suicide in despair.

"Now, if you think it right that I should give the King an account of all this, let me know, and I will send some of those who gave me the various details."

The story is particularly interesting, as the source of Goethe's *Braut von Korinth.* In Goethe's poem the girl is a Christian, while her lover is a pagan. Their parents are friends, and they have been betrothed in their youth. He comes to stay with her parents, knowing nothing of her death, when she appears to him. As in the Greek story, her body is material, though cold and bloodless, and he thinks her still alive. He takes her in his arms and kisses her back to life and love, breathing his own passion into her. Then the mother surprises them, and the daughter upbraids her for her cruelty, but begs that she and her lover may be buried together, as he must pay for the life he has given her with his own.

VII

WARNING APPARITIONS

As we should expect, there are a number of instances of warning apparitions in antiquity; and it is interesting to note that the majority of these are gigantic women endowed with a gift of prophecy.

Thus the younger Pliny* tells us how Quintus Curtius Rufus, who was on the staff of the Governor of Africa, was walking one day in a colonnade after sunset, when a gigantic woman appeared before him. She announced that she was Africa, and was able to predict the future, and told him that he would go to Rome, hold office there, return to the province with the highest authority, and there die. Her prophecy was fulfilled to the letter, and as he landed in Africa for the last time the same figure is reported to have met him.

So, again, at the time of the conspiracy of Callippus, Dion was meditating one evening before the porch of his house, when he turned round and saw a gigantic female figure, in the form of a Fury, at the end of the corridor, sweeping the floor with a broom. The

* *Ep.*, vii. 27.

vision terrified him, and soon afterwards his only son committed suicide and he himself was murdered by the conspirators.*

A similar dramatic story is related of Drusus during his German campaigns.† While engaged in operations against the Alemanni, he was preparing to cross the Elbe, when a gigantic woman barred the way, exclaiming, "Insatiate Drusus, whither wilt thou go? Thou art not fated to see all things. Depart hence, for the end of thy life and of thy deeds is at hand." Drusus was much troubled by this warning, and instantly obeyed the words of the apparition; but he died before reaching the Rhine.

We meet with the same phenomenon again in Dio Cassius, among the prodigies preceding the death of Macrinus, when "a dreadful gigantic woman, seen of several, declared that all that had happened was as nothing compared with what they were soon to endure"—a prophecy which was amply fulfilled by the reign of Heliogabalus.

But the most gigantic of all these gigantic women was, as we should only expect from his marvellous power of seeing ghosts, the one who appeared to Eucrates in the *Philopseudus*.‡ Eucrates has seen over a thousand ghosts in his time, and is now quite used to them, though at first he found them rather upsetting; but he had been given a ring and a charm by an

* Plutarch, *Dion*, ii. 55.
† Dio Cassius, 55. 1. Cp. Suet., *Claud.*, i.
‡ Lucian, *Philops.*, 20.

Arab, which enabled him to deal with anything supernatural that came in his way. The ring was made from the iron of a cross on which a criminal had been executed, and doubtless had the same value in Eucrates' eyes that a piece of the rope with which a man has been hung possesses in the eyes of a gambler to-day. On this particular occasion he had left his men at work in the vineyard, and was resting quietly at midday, when his dog began to bark. At first he thought it was only a favourite boy of his indulging in a little hunting with some friends; but on looking up he saw in front of him a woman at least three hundred feet high, with a sword thirty feet long. Her lower extremities were like those of a dragon, and snakes were coiling round her neck and shoulders. Eucrates was not in the least alarmed, but turned the seal of his ring, when a vast chasm opened in the earth, into which she disappeared. This seems rather to have astonished Eucrates; but he plucked up courage, caught hold of a tree that stood near the edge, and looked over, when he saw all the lower world lying spread before him, including the mead of asphodel, where the shades of the blessed were reclining at ease with their friends and relations, arranged according to clans and tribes. Among these he recognized his own father, dressed in the clothes in which he was buried; and it must have been comforting to the son to have such good evidence that his parent was safely installed in the Elysian Fields. In a few moments the chasm closed.

Warning Apparitions

Dio Cassius* relates how Trajan was saved in the great earthquake that destroyed nearly the whole of Antioch by a phantom, which appeared to him suddenly, and warned him to leave his house by the window. A similar story is told of the poet Simonides, who was warned by a spectre that his house was going to fall, and thus enabled to make his escape in time.

I will include here a couple of stories which, if they cannot exactly be classed as stories of warning apparitions, are interesting in themselves, and may at least be considered as ghost stories. Pliny the Younger† tells us how a slave of his, named Marcus, imagined that he saw someone cutting his hair during the night. When he awoke, the vision proved to have been a true one, for his hair lay all round him. Soon afterwards the same thing happened again. His brother, who slept with him, saw nothing; but Marcus declared that two people came in by the windows, dressed in white, and, after cutting his hair, disappeared. "Nothing astonishing happened," adds Pliny, "except that I was not prosecuted, as I undoubtedly should have been, had Domitian lived; for this happened during his principate. Perhaps the cutting of my slave's hair was a sign of my approaching doom, for accused people cut their hair," as a sign of mourning. One may be allowed to wonder whether, after all, a fondness for practical joking is not even older than the age of the younger Pliny.

* 68. 25. † *Ep.*, vii. 27. 12.

This story, like nearly every other that we have come across, has a parallel in the *Philopseudus*. Indeed, Lucian seems to have covered almost the whole field of the marvellous, as understood at that time, in his determination to turn it into ridicule in that amusing dialogue. In this case we are told of a little statue of Æsculapius, which stood in the house of the narrator of the story, and at the feet of which a number of pence had been placed as offerings, while other coins, some of them silver, were fastened to the thighs with wax. There were also silver plates which had been vowed or offered by those who had been cured of fever by the god. The offerings and tablets are just such as might be found in a Catholic church in the South of Europe to-day; but the coins, in our more practical modern world, would have found their way into the coffers of the church. One would like to know what was the ultimate destination of these particular coins—whether they were to be sent as contributions to one of the temples of Æsculapius, which were the centre of the medical world at this period, and had elaborate hospitals attached to them, about which we learn so much from Aristides.

In this case they were merely a source of temptation to an unfortunate Libyan groom, who stole them one night, intending to make his escape. But he had not studied the habits of the statue, which, we are told, habitually got down from its pedestal every night; and in this case such was the power of the god that he kept the man wandering about all night,

unable to leave the court, where he was found with the money in the morning, and soundly flogged. The god, however, considered that he had been let off much too easily; and he was mysteriously flogged every night, as the weals upon him showed, till he ultimately died of the punishment.

Ælian* has a charming story of Philemon, the comic poet. He was still, apparently, in the full vigour of his powers when he had a vision of nine maidens leaving his house in the Piræus and bidding him farewell. When he awoke, he told his slave the story, and set to work to finish a play with which he was then busy. After completing it to his satisfaction, he wrapped himself in his cloak and lay down upon his bed. His slave came in, and, thinking he was asleep, went to wake him, when he found that he was dead. Ælian challenges the unbelieving Epicureans to deny that the nine maidens were the nine Muses, leaving a house which was so soon to be polluted by death.

Many stories naturally gather round the great struggle for the final mastery of the Roman world which ended in the overthrow of the Republic. Shakespeare has made us familiar with the fate of the poet Cinna, who was actually mistaken for one of the conspirators against Cæsar and murdered by the crowd. He dreamt, on the night before he met his death, that Cæsar invited him to supper, and when he refused the invitation, took him by the hand and forced him down into a deep,

* *Fragm.*, 84.

dark abyss, which he entered with the utmost horror.

But there is a story connected with the crossing of the Rubicon by Cæsar that certainly deserves to be better known than it is.* It is only fitting that an event fraught with such momentous consequences should have a supernatural setting of some kind; and Suetonius relates that while Cæsar was still hesitating whether he should declare himself an enemy of his country by crossing the little river that bounded his province at the head of an army, a man of heroic size and beauty suddenly appeared, playing upon a reed-pipe. Some of the troops, several trumpeters among them, ran up to listen, when the man seized a trumpet, blew a loud blast upon it, and began to cross the Rubicon. Cæsar at once decided to advance, and the men followed him with redoubled enthusiasm after what they had just seen.

It is to Plutarch that we owe the famous story of the apparition that visited Brutus in his tent the night before the battle of Philippi, and again during the battle. Shakespeare represents it to be Cæsar's ghost, but has otherwise strictly followed Plutarch. It would be absurd to give the scene in any other words than Shakespeare's.†

> BRUTUS. How ill this taper burns! Ha! who comes here?
> I think it is the weakness of mine eyes
> That shapes this monstrous apparition.
> It comes upon me. Art thou any thing?

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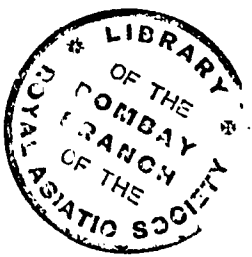
* Suet., *Julius*, 32.
† *Julius Cæsar*, iv. 3.

Warning Apparitions

Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,
That mak'st my blood cold, and my hair to stare?
Speak to me what thou art!
GHOST. Thy evil spirit, Brutus.
BRUTUS. Why com'st thou?
GHOST. To tell thee thou shalt see me at Philippi.
BRUTUS. Well; then I shall see thee again?
GHOST. Ay, at Philippi.
BRUTUS. Why, I will see thee at Philippi, then.
Now I have taken heart, thou vanishest:
Ill spirit, I would hold more talk with thee.

But it had already disappeared, only to meet Brutus again on the fatal day that followed.

THE END



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